

SEA Communities of Practice: Using Waiver Requests to Increase Flexibility

Slides 1, 2, & 8¹

PEGGIE: It looks like there's a couple of questions from Margaret and Kate.

SCOTT: Okay. Do I have to repeat everything I just said?

PEGGIE: Nope, no, no.

LESLIE: Can I make a comment?

SCOTT: Yes, thank you, Leslie.

LESLIE: Referring to when Scott was talking about the waiver request, we've had 12 successful grantees in 2010 and quite a significant number, nine, asked for...to have a five-year grant. But I just want to emphasize to the SEA directors who are planning for their CSP project to be five years, in your budget narrative and in your budget, the years are all fully funded. So please, make sure that you submit a five-year budget if you are requesting a waiver to have your project from three to five years. Because I know this is new to a lot of CSP project directors who are used to submitting three-year budgets only. But just please make sure that when you submit your budget, make sure it's five years if you're asking for a five-year grant.

MARGARET: So, this is Margaret, and that, I think, was my question, but I'm going to ask it, and that is—so, if we want 20 thousand dollars, we would then say—20 thousand dollars, 20 million dollars, whatever—we would do a five-year plan and you would then be issuing money each of those five years.

LESLIE: Yes.

MARGARET: Okay, all right, that was my question.

¹ The PowerPoint slides for the archived webinar do not correspond exactly with the PowerPoint presentation stored on the website.



SCOTT: I know Cathy said she'd be able to join us. Cathy, do you have anything you wanted to add to the introduction that I and Leslie made?

CATHY: No, you've covered it all.

SCOTT: Okay. Great. All right, so, Peggie, do you want to moderate questions?

PEGGIE: Bobby, you had raised your hand, did you have a question?

BOBBY: Thank you. I just wanted to point out as far as the denial of the waiver that our waiver request at the time was that we allow CDE employees and state Board of Education employees to serve as the peer reviewers, so that was denied. But again, if you look at the response letter, and, Mr. Pearson, I appreciate you talking about how the flexibility in the program and the ability for us to design a program that would meet the efficiencies of, you know, the federal program. So that was very helpful and it allowed us...it did give us a little bit of leeway, so we were able to make appropriate corrections to it. So, thank you.

SCOTT: You're welcome.

PEGGIE: We did have one question come in before the webinar. So, this state was particularly interested in learning more about the possibility to request a waiver to exceed the 5 percent administrative cost maximum in order to effectively address the competitive preference priorities for 2011.

SCOTT: I think, Leslie—I mean, Cathy—can you respond to that? I believe that historically we have viewed that as part of the category of things that we can't make waivers for because it would be an extension of the authorizing language of Congress. The Congress appropriates money and says up to 5 percent can be used for administrative, and so that would be an area where we were not permitted to make waiver requests.

LESLIE: Actually, I can remember two different instances, and I believe a couple of years ago a state came in with that request, to use like 6 percent for administrative purposes and that was not approved and I believe it was based on that reason and another state a couple of

years ago, they asked to use instead of 10 percent of their grant for dissemination purposes, they asked for 20, and that.... I've never seen a request such as that approved and it's probably based on the fact that those numbers, that formula cannot be changed.

CATHY: This is Cathy Grimes-Miller. Leslie, you're correct, and Scott, that historically we generally have not approved a waiver request to increase the percentage of program expenses that can be used to cover administrative costs, but the reasoning is not because we don't think we have the authority to do it. We've determined from a policy standpoint that that is not an area where we would like to grant waivers. But from a legal standpoint, we have granted waivers in the past to allow SEA applicants to use a larger percentage of dissemination costs in certain circumstances, and that's something that we generally consider on a case-by-case basis based on the facts, based on a number of factors, including the number of charter schools in a given state that have used startup grants and no longer qualify for startup grants and have operated charter schools at a very high level and have best practices or other programs that are worth sharing with other public schools in the area. So, with respect to dissemination and using greater than 10 percent, we have granted waivers for that purpose, but we have not granted waivers to increase the amount of administrative costs that can be used.

SCOTT: So I guess what I would say, therefore, is that if you believe that you have a compelling reason why you should spend more than 5 percent, you should send it because it won't be rejected out of hand, but there's a pretty strong bias against it. Part of the reason, frankly, is because, you know, if Congress puts those limits, they tend to...there tends to be a bias in Congress against money that is spent on administrative functions because they want to see as much of it going out into the field as possible. And so I guess I would say there is some political concern that if we were granting waivers willy-nilly around the 5 percent that then we could see some legislative changes that would perhaps lower it or perhaps limit our flexibility even further, and maybe going beyond just the administrative cost areas, you know, that they could pull the whole waiver authority, for example.

CATHY: I think the other thing, too, with respect to waivers of the 5 percent limit on administrative costs is that, as Scott mentioned, Congress has

spoken with respect to how important it views program funds to be used for actually operating a charter school program. The other thing, too, is that happens to be a provision that applies across Department of Education programs. And so granting a waiver for the charter schools program could potentially have wide-ranging effects across other education programs. And so again, that's just an area where from a policy standpoint, the department has determined historically that there's no compelling reason for increasing that.

SCOTT: But that's not to say that you couldn't write a very compelling case and it might make it through, but I would say that the odds are low. One other thing is that the 5 percent is over the life of the grant. So if a state spends a little more one year, but then makes it up by the end of the life of the grant, that would not be considered a violation.

PEGGIE: Scott, if you're on speaker, if you could take your phone off speaker, there might be a little bit of a ...

SCOTT: I'm not on speaker, but I am getting an echo.

PEGGIE: Okay, so I'll try to mute somebody else who might be causing that. If anyone is on their cell phone and does not have your phone muted, if you could please mute your phone, there seems to be a particular problem with cell phones on speaker. And then we do have a couple of other questions that came in through the chat. So one was, what about a waiver for allowing dissemination grants for three years instead of two?

SCOTT: I can't think of a problem with that on its face, can you, Leslie or Cathy?

LESLIE: Well, to me, because it's very clear in the statute of what it's not to be used for. I definitely don't remember any kind of requests such as that coming in. But what do you think, Cathy?

CATHY: Again, I think this is a situation that we would have to consider on a case-by-case basis. To my knowledge, we have not received a request to extend the period for dissemination of funds, but as Scott mentioned in his introduction, we have authorized states to award more than one dissemination grant based on the facts and situations where we felt it

was appropriate. So again, this would be a novel issue that we would be looking at. I would encourage you, if you have a compelling reason to submit a request for a waiver. On the other hand, I think that because we have awarded waivers in the past, to allow states to award charter schools more than one dissemination grant, that would probably have a greater likelihood of being approved, again based on the facts and based on the reasons for requesting it.

SCOTT: But I would say generally that we haven't been thrilled with the performance of the dissemination part of the charter schools program. So we are looking for ways to make it more effective and better and encourage your creativity in suggesting ways, which may include waivers. So, we can't say on the phone how we would treat any specific requests, we have to view it on a case-by-case basis. But I think particularly in the dissemination area, we're looking for ways to make this even more effective and looking for your creativity to help us do that.

PEGGIE: Great. There is one question that goes back a little bit to what you were saying. You did say that you waived the limit of one CSP dissemination grant per school. So this grantee is asking, if that is possible, can they apply for a waiver to let those schools receive a second dissemination grant and if so, can they do it before they invite applicants? They want to make sure that they make it clear to these schools that it is possible before they go through the rigorous application process that they are eligible.

SCOTT: Yes, but you probably want to make sure you have a waiver approved by us before you did that, otherwise you might have some disappointed applicants if it were for some reason denied. I can think of two ways you might request a waiver around the multiple grants. One would be where you already have somebody who's applied and you're saying look at this really high-quality school, they've already received a grant, we want a specific waiver to allow us to give this school a second grant. The other would be something more general, where you would say, we want a waiver to award a second or a third grant to a high-quality charter school, and then you would need to explain to us what the criteria would be by which they would be selected, how you would ensure that somebody who received a second grant, or a

multiple grant, was indeed deserving of that. So it would be a slightly different waiver request.

PEGGIE: Joanna, it looks like you might want to follow up by phone.

JOANNA: Oh, can you hear me? He just answered the question. That's exactly what my question was, can we do it before we invite the applicants, just so we can say this is a possibility. So I'm answered, thank you.

CATHY: In fact, we would advise you to do so, as Scott mentioned, just to make sure that you have a waiver in place. The other point that I'd like to mention is that one of the things that we would look at in considering a request for a waiver, based on the number of dissemination grants a state can award a charter school, would be the types of activities that would be carried out. As I recall in the request that came in, one of the conditions for granting the waiver was that there could not be any duplication of activities in terms of program funds being used for the same types of activities. So again, as you submit your waivers, I would err on the side of providing as much background information and facts to support such a waiver to ensure that program funds would not be used to carry out the same activities that might have been carried out previously.

LESLIE: If I can just add on to that, also with the waiver that Scott and Cathy have been discussing that has asked for the additional dissemination, the additional CSP grant for dissemination subgrantees, it was noted that the SEA had to make sure that the subgrantee is receiving these dissemination subgrants, that they show "Complied with the eligibility criteria and other requirements of section 5204(f)(6) of the federal statute." So, they still must comply with the eligibility criteria for dissemination subgrantees.

PEGGIE: It looks like Cindy Murphy has a question—Cindy?

CINDY: Yes, thank you very much. Hi, everyone, this is Cindy from Minnesota. Scott, I think I recall you mentioning at our meeting in December that one of the waiver potentials that you might be interested in considering is for not just a second dissemination grant to the same school, but a second planning-slash-implementation grant to the same charter school if it were for a significant expansion. And that, I know that..., I'm

tracking what you're saying about you could either do it individually or you could provide for a request ahead of time with criteria upon which you would do that. Am I correct in assuming that what you've talked about doesn't just apply to dissemination grant waivers, meaning more than one per school, but it could potentially also apply to the planning and implementation grant?

SCOTT: Yes, and it's something that we did cover at the project directors meeting, and we still...we have not received any waiver requests for this, but it's something that we would be interested in considering. There are examples where, you know, you have a school that started as an elementary school and now they want to expand to a middle school or vice versa and they cannot receive CSP money, other than through our CMO competition, because of the ban on more than one grant to a school.

We struggled with that issue a little bit with the CMO competition because, even though that competition explicitly allows funding expansions, we wanted to define what an expansion was so that somebody wouldn't ask for money to add 10 more seats or 50 seats, but that it was a significant expansion, and the definition that we settled on for the CMO competition was that you were increasing the student body of your school by at least 50 percent or you were increasing at least two grade levels. And, you know, we've heard lots of tales of woes from schools that, you know, kind of either had to forgo money to open a middle school or schools that, you know, would take the money, but then, for example, they would have to run a lottery for their sixth graders to apply into the middle school, which they didn't want to do either.

We've also seen statistics like in 2009 of the 16 KIPP schools that opened, only six received CSP funds despite the tremendous track record because they were tripped up on particular state rules that said "Oh, you're opening a new school, but we're considering it as an extension of the original school." We're working on nonregulatory guidance revisions that we hope to publish soon that will provide more clarity about what constitutes a separate school, and we talked about that at a project directors meeting. But this could be another way of giving states flexibility to fund the replication of high-quality schools or to fund the expansion.

I guess the concern, of course, is that, you know, schools would be double-dipping and so, if you were to consider a waiver request, I think it would be important to be really clear about how you would ensure that this was (a) going for, you know, something that was genuinely new as opposed to a second grant for the same thing, and second, how you would ensure that this was going only to expanding the highest-quality schools in your state.

We've been very compelled by some data we've seen in certain states—the one I'm thinking of most highly is California—where, you know, they've shown that the charter schools in the state are disproportionately represented among the best and the worst schools in the state and we're seeing that pattern in a lot of other places as well. And so whatever we can do to encourage the closure of the lowest performing schools and the replication and expansion of the highest performing schools is consistent with our overall policy thrust.

PEGGIE: For those of you who might have joined in the last few minutes, we're finishing up a waiver webinar and we'll start the technical assistance conference call shortly. Are there any other questions for Scott? You can either raise your hand, state the question verbally over the phone or enter the question in the chat.

MARGARET: This is Margaret. (I entered it in the chat, but I sent it privately to Peggie.) We're from Oregon, we're very interested in whether we can request a waiver to grant a one-year no-cost extension past the 36 months to the subgrantee because of reasons beyond their control of being able to open.

SCOTT: Cathy, do you want to respond to that?

CATHY: Sure, can you repeat that question again, please?

MARGARET: Yes, we're interested in whether we could request a waiver for granting a one-year, no-cost extension to a subgrantee, past the 36 months, because of reasons beyond their control that they could use that money within the 36 months.

CATHY: So you wouldn't be providing additional funding to them, you would just be extending the grant period?

MARGARET: Yes.

CATHY: Yes, in fact, in a situation like that, essentially all the state would have to do is notify the department that they would be extending the grant period for one year.

MARGARET: Okay, so would we notify them how? What would be the process? Because we've done it through our CSP reporting, through the Excel spreadsheet to WestEd, we've done that, but we need to do it on the front end, I would expect. But I'm not sure how we do that.

CATHY: Yes, you have to do it before the grant period actually expires. And Leslie may have a better sense of this, but I would imagine that just a simple letter or e-mail to a program administrator, requesting a no-cost extension, in accordance with the Edgar provision. There is a provision in the department's regulations that authorizes grantees to essentially obtain a no-cost extension at least one time for 12 months.

MARGARET: Understand I'm not saying grantee, I'm saying subgrantees.

CATHY: Okay, but the state's grant would still be active, correct?

MARGARET: Yes.

CATHY: Yes. In fact, that's something that the subgrantee would be entitled to receive.

MARGARET: But we still would need to give...

LESLIE: Yes, that's correct—to notify your program officer.

SCOTT: It's just a simple notice.

MARGARET: Okay. Thank you.

LESLIE: But it's not a waiver.

SCOTT: All right.

PEGGIE: Are there any other questions before we wrap up this section? Okay. So I'm going to take that as a no, and we will have additional questions...

SCOTT: Now, I see a hand raised by Joanna.

PEGGIE: Joanna, I think that was from before and you didn't clear it. Is that right?

JOANNA: Yes, I'm sorry.

SCOTT: Okay.

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PEGGIE: That's okay, that's okay. So the technical assistance portion will be facilitated by Scott, Leslie—and Erin Pfeltz will be joining. Erin is also a charter school program officer for the United States Department of Education. So I will hand it over to Erin, Leslie, and Scott.

Slides 9 & 10

ERIN: Great, thank you, Peggie. This is Erin Pfeltz. I'm going to start talking just briefly about grants.gov before turning it over to Scott and Leslie to talk more about the meat of the SEA application. But before we get into that, I wanted to make sure you were all aware, hopefully you already are, that we are switching back to grants.gov as the electronic application system this year. I'm sure you know we used e-grants for the past few years. We did use grants.gov previously, which was an interesting experience. But the department is switching back to grants.gov this year. We'll be one of the first programs in OII with a closing date of 2011. So I just want to briefly go over some points of the system.

If you remember, grants.gov works differently from e-grants largely in the registration phase. You can download, you can access, download, completely fill out your application without registering in the system. However, you must register prior to submission and registration can

take, grants.gov says, up to five business days, but they also warn that it can take a couple of weeks depending on response times, preparedness, all of that. I'm guessing that most of your organizations do have a DUNS number, are registered in the CCR, and have an e-Biz point of contact with grants.gov. However, I wouldn't assume that, please check. Make sure that all of that is set up. You as the grant submitter will need to be authorized as the AOR for your—an AOR for your organization; organizations can have multiple AORs. And that's something that your e-Biz point of contact needs to confirm you as. The timeline for that can depend on the responsiveness of whoever at your SEA is designated as the e-Biz point of contact. So, I would highly recommend that if you haven't done so already, check on this registration process, get authorized as the AOR so that you can submit. If you already are authorized, double-check your registration. You can do this at the grants.gov website. Please do this now. Don't wait until the week that the applications are due to check out the registration process. Does anybody have any questions about registration? It's in much more detail at the grants.gov website. I just want to make sure everybody is aware of that.

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All right, when you're at the grants.gov site, hopefully you've already gone and found the application. I'm going to go really quickly through finding it because it can be sometimes tricky for people. Since, if you do find the application feature, it won't actually let you apply for it through that way. You need to click on "apply for grants" at the grants.gov website. It's on the left-hand side of the screen under "for applicants." When you click on "download a grant application package," you can search for the application package two ways; one is by the CFDA, one is by the funding opportunity number. You can see on the slide the funding opportunity number is pretty long and complicated. The CFDA is quite short, so that's the easiest way to search. Just remember, grants.gov does not accept alpha characters, so search only by 84.282. If you add the A in, you're not going to get any results back. You should only get one result from the search, and you can click on "download," which is the far right-hand box, the link right there.

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When you click “download,” a new window is going to pop up on your computer screen and it’s going to give you the option to do three things: one is to sign up for e-mail alerts on changes made to the application, one is to download the application instructions, and the last is to download the application package itself. Obviously, you’ll want to do all three of those things.

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The application package instructions, I’m sure you remember, are the long Word document that includes all the instructions for the forms, a copy of the notice, a copy of the CSP statute et cetera. The application package itself is a PDF document that you’ll save on your computer. You can work on it offline. Multiple people can work on it. Reminder—save often. The “save and submit” button is not going to become active until it’s completely filled out. So don’t be surprised if it’s not functioning at the beginning.

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A couple of hints about completing the application: The yellow boxes on the forms are the required ones. This is a change from when we previously used grants.gov. Narrative sections now must be in PDF. That’s the only format we’re accepting them in. As a warning, grants.gov will let you upload any kind of document that you want, however, it’s not going to transfer to our G5 system correctly. The notice inviting applications is very specific that things must be uploaded as PDF. You can add multiple attachments in grants.gov. So if you’re in the other attachment section and you want to add resumes to add other information, you can do them as separate attachments. In the previous...a few years ago with grants.gov, I remember it limited people to 10. I tested it a little while ago and I got bored around adding 20 different narrative attachments, so I’m not sure if that limit still exists. But I just want to warn you that it used to be 10.

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Submission: Once the “save and submit” button becomes active, this is when you will log in using the username and password when you were

authorized as an AOR. Submission must be complete by 4:30 and zero seconds Eastern time. It's not clicking the "submit" button, it's completing the submission process.

Another key difference between grants.gov and e-grants: grants.gov is not going to lock you out at 4:30. I'm sure you remember with e-grants, if it was 4:30 and 01 seconds, the system wouldn't let you hit "submit" anymore; grants.gov is not going to stop you. You're going to hit "submit" and it's going to show up marked late and there won't be anything we can do about it. So if the clock that you're looking at is slow, grants.gov is not going to tell you that you're too late when you're submitting. So please—I can't emphasize this enough—submit early. Make sure that you have plenty of time to upload the submission. Larger files do take longer to complete the submission or, if the system is slow, which it frequently is at the end of the day as multiple applications are coming in, it can take longer.

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You will get an e-mail verifying your submission. But I want to mention that grants.gov also has a "track my application" feature at the website, and I would recommend you do this. We had a grantee in previous years, not in the SEA program, who did not receive their e-mail notification because it was being caught by their spam filter. Their e-mail notification had said that there was a problem with their application and they needed to resubmit. They never got them and they never realized it until it was too late, that their application didn't come in. Grants.gov will let you track your application from the website, so we definitely recommend that you do that to make sure there were no errors, to verify receipt, and to see the time/date stamp from your submission.

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Final thing that I want to mention: grants.gov has a bunch of different help features. They do have a help line, 1-800-518-4726. I also gave you the link to their help webpage as well as a screen shot of some of the materials that they have there. A lot of materials sort of walk you through the system, get you accustomed, see some of the problems people have. Definitely take a look at that, get familiar with the system

now. If you have questions about using grants.gov, don't hesitate to contact me, to contact Leslie, to call the help desk. Just once again, a reminder: Application are due at 4:30 and zero seconds. So please, please submit early. Anybody have any questions on grants.gov? All right, great. If that's it, I will turn it over to Scott and Leslie to talk about the rest of the notice.

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SCOTT: Great, thank you, Erin. So we're going to walk through some of the major changes to the notice from last year. Try to do it fairly quickly so that then people will have time for questions. So, the first change comes with competitive preference priority 1, periodic review and application. This is a preference priority that comes from the statute and it asks the state to provide—it provides preferences for a state that provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years. I will say that in the past we have states that had charter terms of 10 or 15 years were granted preference priorities. I'm not exactly sure why. The decision about granting preference priorities is no longer being done by the charter school staff. It is now going to be done by the peer reviewers, and they can grant up to 10 points. So it's no longer a binary decision of whether you get zero or 10. To help the peer reviewers, we are inviting applicants—it's not required, but we're inviting applicants—to provide information, more information about the periodic review and application, particularly whether it is what we consider a high-stakes review, in other words, that it includes a public vote on whether to terminate, extend, or renew the school's charter and whether a failure to affirmatively renew or extend the charter would result in the school being closed. So that it's not a review like some person in some office reviews the charter and checks it off, but it's actually a high-stakes review where the school is up for renewal or closure.

The second change is on the second preference priority, which is number of high-quality schools. One of our objectives is to increase the number of high-quality schools, and we've never defined that term. And so we invite you to define what is a high-quality school and then provide us with information about how many high-quality schools there are in the state and how that's changed over time.

The third change comes with some new competitive priorities. These were drawn from a menu of priorities that we refer to as the “secretary supplemental priorities.” The department enumerated, I believe it was 13, priorities that we believe are important priorities that ought to be reflected in many of our grant competitions, and they act sort of as a Chinese menu for these competitive grants, and we selected three for this competition. And when we select them, I should note that we have to use the exact language that was developed and for which public comment was solicited. So some of these priorities, five through seven, are written fairly generically, and we tried to, in some cases, provide clarification in the note. So, competitive preference priority 5 is improving achievement and high school graduation rates. And there are four separate areas, and applicants can earn up to three points for each one of those areas. So the first one would be accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates for rural; the second one is for students with disabilities; the third is for English language learners; and the fourth is for high-poverty schools. [brief interruption] Now, I should say that just because it says improving high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates, things that happen as early as the preschool level can certainly play a role in that. And so I would not assume that you need to limit your answer to things that you’re doing at the high school level. But this would be what specifically, how specifically does the charter school program that you’re proposing that we fund tackle each one of these, and you don’t have to respond to all of them, but you could receive up to three points for each of them. And then the note goes into more detail and gives examples. For example, the applicant could describe the guidance or support it would provide charter school developers to assist them in recruiting and providing high-quality services to students who are members of the particular population. Or you could talk about how you’re going to monitor charter schools to ensure that they’re taking effective and active steps to recruit and enroll students. Or how you’re monitoring to make sure that those students are being well served. Or you could discuss perhaps you’re going to be running your subgrant competition in a way that would provide preference for schools that you think will further the goal of this preference priority. So it’s a big preference priority, it’s a big area, but there’s a lot of opportunity for states to propose different approaches that they could take to address it.

The third, the next area of change is a new preference priority around diversity. So, this is specifically for projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity or avoiding racial group isolation. So for example, we invite applicants to talk about how they might design their subgrant competition to meet that priority. But there's many ways that applicants could propose to meet this priority. I should alert you that we are working on a series of frequently asked questions based on questions we've already gotten about this notice, and there will almost certainly be a Q & A regarding this priority. And so, when it's released, we will send it out to all of you, but we'll get that to you as quickly as possible.

The final new priority is a competitive preference priority around improving productivity. This is increasingly a focus in the department. We know that almost all states in the country are facing severe budget crises, as are the majority of school districts. The secretary has talked eloquently, I think, about the need for schools to figure out how to do more with less. And we think that charter schools are, really have the opportunity to be, at the leading edge of this because there are so many new schools, there's so much opportunity for innovation and new approaches. And so we are offering priority points for states that propose how they're going to use the charter sector to help improve productivity in schools, significantly increasing efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources, while improving student learning or other educational outcomes. So, you know, a classic example would be hybrid schools that use computers and technology-based instruction for a portion of the day and therefore improve productivity, but we don't have a particular preference or bias as to what the approach is and are eager to see what you all propose. And then, finally, there's an invitational priority—meaning that you're invited to write to it, but it will not affect your score—and that is around support for turnaround schools. Turning to Section 2 of the notice around award information, I think you all know that we currently do not have an approved budget for fiscal year 2011. We're operating on a continuing resolution, which essentially means that every day we get 1/365th of our budget allocated to us by Treasury. Because of that, though, and all of the discussions in Congress around what's going to happen with this year's budget, there is a more-than-usual amount of uncertainty about what funds will be made available. So we don't really know, so

we put an estimate that there will be between 45 and 60 million dollars for new awards. But, that's going to depend on what the ultimate congressional action is.

MARGARET: This is Margaret in Oregon. Can you talk a little bit about the competitive priorities and how they relate to your score?

SCOTT: Yes. So, at the end of the document, and I have to admit I've never understood why it's done this way, but it is. At the end of the document [are] the selection criteria, and the selection criteria total 100 points for SEAs that don't write to the dissemination, that aren't seeking dissemination funds, and 110 points for SEAs that are. So let's just for the sake of easy math, let's say you're not writing to the dissemination one, and you can earn up to 100 points through the selection criteria. Then on top of that, you can earn up to, I believe it's, 50 points through the competitive priorities.

MARGARET: Okay.

SCOTT: So, competitive priority number one—I'm sorry—is 10, number two is 8, so that's 18, number three is 12, so that's 30, number four is 5, so that's 35, number five is 12, so whatever it is. So let's say it's 50 points, so then that means the total number of points that you can earn is 150 points.

MARGARET: Okay. Thank you.

SCOTT: And then what we do is we normalize as a percentage, so for each state we ask what your total number of possible points is, and it could be a little bit higher if you're going for the dissemination, then we look at the total number of points you've earned both through the selection criteria as well as through the competitive preference priorities. We then take the percentage that you got, so if you got 100 out of 150, you would have a percentage of 66 percent, and then we can line up all the states and see who got the highest percentage of points.

MARGARET: Okay, that helps. Thank you.

SCOTT: Sure. So then text is the award basis, and there's an important change here where, let me read this—under "Award Basis," it says "In

determining whether to approve a grant award and the amount of such award, the Department will consider, among other things, the amount of any unobligated carryover funds the CSP...the applicant has under the existing CSP grant and the applicant's performance and use of funds under any previous or existing award." So let me stop there and, first of all, say that the only thing we're looking at in terms of unobligated carryover funds is that word unobligated. So if you have obligated money to a bunch of charter schools, but they're still in the middle of their start-up phase and they haven't drawn that money down, the fact that there are funds remaining in your accounts for those schools for which money has been obligated is not going to play a role in our determination about the award. It's only money that you have not obligated.

The second point, and this is the new one, is that we're taking into consideration the applicant's performance and use of funds under a previous or existing award. Now, that is a regulation that has already existed, but we're highlighting it in this notice. In particular, the next sentence where we say "in assessing the applicant's performance and use of funds under a previous or existing award, the Secretary will consider, among other things, the outcomes the applicant has achieved and the results of any Departmental grant monitoring as well as an applicant's process in remedying any deficiencies identified in such monitoring." So, every one of you has been through a monitoring process and every one of you has received some scores of three and some scores of two and some scores of one. One of the things that Leslie and I are going to be doing with each of you over the coming months is getting on the phone and going through the areas where you were scored low and trying to understand what you have done since the monitoring to address that issue. But you're also welcome to address it in writing or in this application—in the application, out of the application—but any information that we have that says "We know that we got low scores in the area of ensuring that the charter schools, that parents are well informed. "Well, here's the things we've done since then to rectify that." All that information will be very helpful to us in determining the award basis. So let me stop there before I go into the other—the remaining—four items and just ask if there are any questions on the points that I've covered so far.

PEGGIE: It looks like we have a few hands raised. I think Joanna was first. Joanna?

JOANNA: Oh, hi. That's actually about the selection criteria. So that question I put up can wait until we go through the selection criteria. Okay?

SCOTT: Okay.

PEGGIE: Okay. I'm going to pronounce your name wrong, Sema, Sima, Sulovich? No? Cliff from New York?

CLIFF: Hi, Scott and everyone. If a state has run out of money on their current grant and are awaiting a supplemental allocation determination, will we know that before we have to submit this grant? As you can imagine, in order to calibrate our request for the next grant, it would be helpful to know how much of a supplemental we'll get to finish out this grant to craft a budget. I'm guessing that you won't know until Congress does something, but just looking for some guidance about how to build that contingency in and whether we could present two budgets, one if we get supplemental and one if we don't?

SCOTT: Yes, I would say that I would.... I can't tell you whether you will or not. We have not been getting any approvals for supplementals while we're on a continuing resolution because of the uncertainty about what our funding levels will be. If...The current continuing resolution expires March 4th, and so if we get a budget by then, it could happen very quickly, or at least the determination could. So I would say yes, submit two budgets. That would be fine.

CLIFF: Thank you.

SCOTT: Sure.

PEGGIE: Gail in Illinois?

GAIL: Can you hear me? Okay. When you were talking about the award basis and unobligated funds: If there are unobligated funds from an old grant, would they carry over if you got a new grant or...

SCOTT: Yes, they'd carry over.

GAIL: So, you'd just need to address that, you know, in your budget that you would first use...

SCOTT: Exactly.

GAIL: And go forward with an additional amount.

SCOTT: Exactly. And, you know, so we talked about this at the project directors meeting, but we are hoping that states submit budgets that essentially each year you make a grant you obligate the full amount of the grant to the charter school. That makes budgeting and our review of your budget very easy because you say "Well, we're going to do 12 grants this year and we're going to give 500,000 per, and so that's 6 million dollars. We're going to do 14 grants the next year and that's this amount." We recognize that some states have been doing it where you've been essentially obligating only the year of the money—obligating only the current year's money, and so we're also expecting that some states may submit budgets where the first year there's sort of a catch-up, where you say "Well, we've got these 15 charter schools that are in the second or third year and we need this much to fully obligate their amount, plus we're going to do these new ones. So we're expecting that there will be some catch-up in the first year's budget."

GAIL: Okay. So, when you're saying like obligate, if we give a grant, a three-year grant to a school and we obligate X funds, that doesn't necessarily mean they'll get them because it's based on their year one performance as to whether or how much they get.

SCOTT: Right. Then you could deobligate the money.

GAIL: Okay. So, in other words, in the best of pictures, this is how we would do it realizing that, you know, it might not necessarily work that way, unless everything works perfectly.

SCOTT: Yes, exactly.

PEGGIE: So, let's just try one more time: Sima Sulovich, are you there? Okay, it doesn't look like she's there right now. Hilda Garcia in the chat had a

question to clarify regarding the waiver to subgrantees to extend the maximum time, could you clarify that from the last webinar?

HILDA: Hi. Can you hear me? Hi, this is Hilda from California. So, going back to, I'm sorry I should have asked it earlier, it just left me confused. Going back to the waiver section, if a waiver is approved to a subgrantee because of the reason that the other individual stated that, for them not being able to open, so then we would then be able with approval from ED, be able to extend their planning time, right? Because obviously we don't issue any implementation funds until the school is open.

SCOTT: Right.

HILDA: Sorry. Go ahead.

LESLIE: I guess I'm trying to understand your question. So, are you going back to when the question was asked, Could the subgrantee be extended beyond the year?

HILDA: So, under the program, it's not to exceed 36 months and not to exceed 18 months of planning. So if the waiver for up to 12 months, which was earlier stated for planning, then that would give them 30 months of planning, is that correct?

LESLIE: [Inaudible] a 36-month grant, I mean if they only have 12 months for planning, then that leaves at least the regular 24, two years...

HILDA: They can get up to 18 months though, for planning.

LESLIE: Right. Depending on how much planning they use that will determine...

HILDA: Exactly, so in the situation or the example stated earlier that since the school was unable to open, it would be out of their control, then they could request a no-cost extension.

LESLIE: Well, that request should come in to your program officer. I would not make any action...

SCOTT: Yeah, but if they got a one-year no-cost extension, then they would get up to 30 months for the planning.

HILDA: Right. That's what I was trying to ask. So, since it would be a no-cost extension, the funds would have to be issued, all of the planning funds, prior to the 18 months and they can just use that extra time but the funds would have to have been extended, right, by the 18 months?

LESLIE: What I understand, sometimes as far as activities, there may be a little lag time between, you know, the planning and the implementation stage. So if you're asking, you know, if the planning activities can spill into the implementation time frame, we are aware that that happens.

HILDA: Okay.

SCOTT: But you're asking a different question, which is, Do they have to spend their money in the first 18 months even if they're given 30 months to spend it?

HILDA: Yes, sir, that's what I'm asking, yes.

SCOTT: No, they can take the whole 30 months.

HILDA: Okay, and of course it would be on a case-by-case...

SCOTT: Right.

HILDA: Okay. I wasn't aware that was an option. Because we've had schools that were unable to open in the 18 months and we closed their grant without really...

SCOTT: Yeah, I don't think you need to do that.

HILDA: We did already, and so in case this happens in the future, and it's for the same situation, they were unable to open because of facility, usually it's the facility issue. So it's just good to know that's an option and so we'll seek advice from you in the future if this happens again.

SCOTT: You don't even need to seek advice. You can just grant them the extension and send us an e-mail notifying us.

HILDA: Absolutely, thank you very much.

SCOTT: Sure.

PEGGIE: Ben Walker, do you want to ask your question? You entered a question in the chat. Oh, Ben is saying in the conference memo dated 9/27/2010 the U.S. Department of Education mentions the new nonregulatory guidance exempts the children of a charter school teachers from the lottery requirement. Where can he find that nonregulatory guidance?

SCOTT: It's on our website, so ed.gov then click at the bottom, it says "Offices," go to the Office of Innovation and Improvement, and then go to programs and go to the Charter Schools Program, and then there's something that says like "laws and regulations," and our nonregulatory guidance is there. And we allow children of teachers and founders to be exempted from the lottery as long as it's a small percentage. The new guidance that we're working on that I hope to publish soon will also exempt children of staff, as long as it's a small percentage.

MARGARET: This is Margaret from Oregon. I don't think you've posted anything new since 2004, have you?

SCOTT: No. You know, there was actually, there was a letter about what constituted a new school that was not an integral part of the regulation of the nonregulatory guidance. And if you don't have that, we can e-mail that to you or I suppose we can post it.

MARGARET: That would be helpful.

BEN: Can you hear me? This is Ben Walker here. They're saying that the actual new guidance, the 2007 or [Inaudible] 2004?

SCOTT: It was updated in 2007, I believe.

BEN: It's posted on your website then?

SCOTT: Yeah.

BEN: I'll check it out, thank you.

SCOTT: Okay.

MARGARET: Has it been posted just in the last couple weeks?

SCOTT: No, there's been nothing posted in the last couple weeks.

MARGARET: Okay.

PEGGIE: Okay, Betty Hartnett, would you like to ask your question? So Betty is asking "Under which selection criteria do we address the application requirements, or do we separately address the application requirements? So there are CPPs, application requirements, and selection criteria. It is confusing exactly how to format the narrative to address all of these." If you could give her a little bit of advice, that would be helpful.

SCOTT: I'm sorry, can you repeat the question?

PEGGIE: Betty, did you want to follow up?

LESLIE: I think I understood her question.

SCOTT: Okay, go ahead, Leslie.

LESLIE: Applicants applying through this application, first of all, you must address both of the application requirements and the selection criteria. But if an applicant chooses to, they may choose to respond to the application requirements in the context of the responses to the selection criteria. So for example, you may have under application requirement 1, for example, you may say this is addressed in selection criterion 3. You definitely have to respond to both, but if you want to you may choose to respond to the application requirements in the context of your responses to the selection criteria. Was that helpful? Did I answer your question?

PEGGIE: Okay. Gail in Illinois?

GAIL: Yes, when you're talking about the obligating funds, to [Inaudible] schools, and we realize you do want most of the money to go to the schools and that's what we want. My question is this, I may have heard something in your statement that wasn't there. Are you suggesting that when we award these schools, or amounts, like stick with specific amounts of money, like we will award 14 awards at 250,000 each or that we use a sliding scale as in up to 14 awards between...

SCOTT: Well, first of all, I'd be surprised if it was that low. Typically, grants to start up new schools are...

GAIL: Okay, at any amount of money. I'm saying that we will award up to 14 awards and those awards will be X amount of money, that's it. Everybody who applies will or won't get the same amount of money.

SCOTT: No, I mean, you're free to propose your proposal, to have a grant competition that uses a sliding scale.

GAIL: Okay.

SCOTT: Yeah, you're free to do that. It makes it a little harder for us to determine the reasonableness of your budget. I mean, I'll say candidly, one thing that we do is, a state comes to us and says we're going to award 20 grants in 2012. And then we'll go on the Web and we'll say how many schools actually opened this year? If only 10 schools open this year, then we might say "Well, that doesn't seem reasonable that they would award..."

GAIL: Overly ambitious.

SCOTT: Right, and also, and this will come up as we discuss the selection criteria, you know, we want you to have a selective and competitive process so that federal dollars are going to the most highly qualified applicants. Now, it may be that a state can justify to us why the selection process for awarding charters is so selective in their state and so competitive that every school is super highly qualified and therefore deserving of a start-up grant. But often, if we see that there are 12 schools a year opening in your state and you're planning to grant 12 awards and you've always given every school that opened an award, and the performance of those schools is not particularly

distinguished, we might say “Well, better that they only give 60 percent of the schools an award.” So we might haircut your grant based on that as well. And so it’s important—and you’ll have the opportunity to do this in your selection criteria—you know, to talk about why you are ensuring that your money is going to only high-quality applicants.

GAIL: Okay, why we made the decisions that we...

SCOTT: Yes, exactly.

GAIL: Okay, okay. Great, thank you.

PEGGIE: Michele from Idaho?

MICHELE: Hi. You were starting to say what the average award—what you’ve seen the average award for the new schools is, and then got cut off. What is it?

SCOTT: It’s five to six hundred thousand dollars.

MICHELE: Is that for the total award?

SCOTT: Total award.

MICHELE: Okay. Thank you.

SCOTT: I’ve seen it higher and I’ve seen it lower and some states have higher costs and some states have lower costs and some states take the approach that they’re going to have a sliding scale and some schools need more than others.

MICHELE: Perfect, that helps me out. I just wanted to know about where we were at. So, thank you.

SCOTT: Sure.

PEGGIE: Sima Sulovich? Did you have a question?

SIMA: Thank you, no. My question was answered.

PEGGIE: Oh good, okay. Are there any other questions on this portion or can Scott move forward with the selection criteria? Great, I think you can move forward with the selection criteria, Scott.

SCOTT: Okay. So, selection criterion 1 is pretty much the same. The contribution the charter school grant program will make to assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting state academic content standards.

The second one is a little bit new and that is the degree of flexibility awarded by the SEA to charter schools under the state's charter school law. That comes straight from statute, but we've added some new language here that we really invite you or encourage you to describe how your law establishes an administrative relationship between charter schools and their public chartering agency and exempts them from significant local rules that inhibit the flexible operation of the school. And we specifically enumerate those areas, their budgets, their expenditures, their daily operation, their schedules, their curriculum, and their personnel. So, if you're a state where charters are completely free on their personnel policies, you are going to want to emphasize that because that will help you stand out from states where perhaps charters are not completely free in their personnel policies. So this is an opportunity to put the best face you can on the flexibility that you're able to offer your charter schools.

On selection criterion number 3, the number of high-quality charter schools to be created in the state: That line comes from statute and it's always been there. But this is an area where we're inviting applicants to talk about their peer review process, to describe the process, how the process assesses quality and how you ensure that only high-quality applicants as you define them are selected for funding. If you previously received funding, which most applicants will have, you're invited to provide data on what percentage of applicants were awarded subgrants and how did those applicants do relative to the overall quality?... How did the people you gave money to do, relative to all the people who applied for funds? And that's 20 points, and so that's a big one.

The quality of the management plan is also somewhat new in that this same issue about monitoring comes up again. So, here we invite

applicants to describe any compliance issues that have been identified as well as the steps that you've taken to address them, and that will factor into the points that peer reviewers award on the quality of the management plan.

And then selection criterion—it says 6, but it should be 5. This comes from a line that was put in the 2010 appropriation bill, and we expect that it will reappear in the 2011 appropriation bill or if we have a continuing resolution all year, then we'll still be governed by the 2010 language. But it specifically asks us to take into account the SEA's plan to monitor and hold accountable your charter authorizers through such activities as providing technical assistance or establishing a professional development program so as to improve the capacity of your authorized chartering agencies and to hold them accountable. So that's 20 points, so it's an important one. And in addition, I want to call your attention to, in the application package at page 76 and 77, you have to sign a document that provides a number of assurances. And this all comes straight from the statute, but you assure that, for example, that the subgrant application will contain certain information. But at the end of the document, there's this language around, some things around authorizers, and it's important that you read it carefully and that you understand how you're going to comply with that because, you know, if you are awarded a grant we will be following up and working with you to make sure that those assurances are actually put in place.

And then, finally, on selection criterion 6, under subgrants, we invite applicants that have previously awarded dissemination subgrants to talk about what they've done with them and the success, and potentially you can also talk about lessons learned and how the subgrant competition you're proposing to run might benefit from the lessons learned from your previous competitions.

So, that concludes the overview of the major changes to the application. And, um, let me just ask first of all, Leslie, if you have anything you wanted to add to that summary before we open up to questions.

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LESLIE: I do, and actually it's dealing with the dissemination question under selection criteria. For those of you who have already seen the application package, under application requirement—I believe it's number 4 and number 4 under application requirements—says “Describe how the SEA will disseminate best or promising practices of charter schools to each LEA in the state.” Now, what we've seen in previous years are, some applicants, they try to tell us their dissemination subgrant program under application requirement number 4, when we are asking how their state is going to disseminate best practices. We're not asking or talking about the dissemination subgrant program. It's what actions the SEA is going to take to disseminate the best or promising practices of charter schools. So, I just wanted to make that clear because we've seen some applicants describe their dissemination subgrant process and review under that.

PEGGIE: Okay. So, I think the first question comes from Joanna from Massachusetts.

JOANNA: Hi—I'll just read it. It's regarding the criterion 5. Because Massachusetts is our own authorizer, we're not sure how we can approach this question because it's worth 20 points but we don't have any authorizing agencies.

SCOTT: Okay. Well, who oversees the authorizer? Is it the state board?

JOANNA: Yeah, it's the Massachusetts Board of Education.

SCOTT: So I guess I would talk there about...

JOANNA: They are the state authorizer. So the grants that schools applied for charters, it goes through a big peer review process, recommendations from our office and the commissioner go to the board, and then the board takes a vote if they're going to be awarded a charter or not.

SCOTT: So is there any process by which the board evaluates how it's doing or evaluates the staff or looks at its results or is there any process by which the state legislature has commissioned, you know, reviews how well the law is working or how well the authorizer is functioning? Is there any sort of check and balance on that process, or...?

- JOANNA: I can find out, and that's how I would answer it?
- CLIFF: Can I jump in? This is Cliff from Massachusetts formerly and in New York State, which has a similar issue. The text of that requirement says the SEA's plan. So it's sort of backwards in the sense that the state education agency is overseen by the Board of Ed in Massachusetts or the Board of Regents in New York State and even if there were a legislative process, we can't control that. Do you know what I mean, Scott?
- SCOTT: Yeah, I do.
- CLIFF: It's sort of a backwards reasoning for state Board of Eds that oversees the state education department, which is the authorizer. We also have other authorizers, so we obviously can address that, but I had the same question about, do you want us to provide a self-evaluative, self-reflective kind of thing? Because, you know, it's sort of a circular question in our cases.
- SCOTT: Yes, I would. I mean, I think that it's important that you talk about the training and assistance and planning and systems. I mean, a state could do a good job of authorizing or it could do a really bad job of authorizing. And I guess I would, I think you have no choice but to be self-referential and say here's the systems we're putting in place to be better. Here's how we monitor our progress. Here's how we report our success and how we're doing. Here's how we keep score. So whatever systems and processes you have to ensure that your authorizing functions are high-quality, I think, is what you'd need to put in there.
- KEN: If I may jump in. This is Ken calling from New Jersey. Scott, I appreciate those comments because here in New Jersey we're the only authorizer, but as I speak we are proposing legislation for multiple authorizers here in the state, so could we talk about that process in this section?
- SCOTT: Yes, you could, but if you are the only authorizer.... You know, part of the thing is that these applications are not read by us. They're read by independent peer reviewers. So there's no telling how they'll score this. So I guess my free advice to you would be also talk about what you do to ensure that the state authorizing process is high-quality and has a

process for keeping track of its or for measuring its successes and its quality; what training you provide, what systems you have in place. That way you don't risk some peer reviewer reading it and saying "Oh, well, that's great they talked about what they're planning to do, but they didn't talk about what they do today."

KEN: Okay.

PEGGIE: Cindy in Minnesota has a question.

CINDY: Hi there. Scott, I'm curious if you'd be able to talk a little bit more about that assurance that you referenced on page 77 of the full application packet. I admit I feel like I've spent hours and hours and hours studying this and I missed it. And I believe it's new, number 1, is that correct?

SCOTT: It was here last year, but it's new from the last time you applied.

CINDY: Okay. Okay. Our state law right off the bat, it's not that explicit, nor do we have state regulations that I would feel confident saying "yup, they require it." So, where other policies in the states where the applicant is located require that, would it be sufficient to say that, given that this is a clear emphasis of USDE in funding new awards under this grant project, that we could assure that in our future subgranting—meaning assuming we're successful in receiving a new state award and as we begin to make new awards—that we will require this through our CSP grant project and our official grant award agreements with our schools that we fund in the future?

SCOTT: Well, we should talk about this. The thing is if you put that in your grant rules, then it doesn't apply to each charter school. It applies only to each charter school who receives a grant. And so I'm not sure that would work.

CINDY: I guess that... You know, we can obviously try to make a case and help draw the connection between what our state statute says—which we've got a pretty good state charter law, but it's in no way this explicit—referencing federal law. Our state statute by general rule does not reference federal regs or law.

SCOTT: Right.

CINDY: I'm just trying to be really up front. We can say "Sure, yeah, we'll do it." But I don't know how many states are in any position to say that "Oh yeah, our state law requires that all charters will first and foremost only be renewed according to the student academic achievement provisions in the SEA."

SCOTT: Right.

CINDY: I mean, I'm just trying to be really up front, like okay, here's something that we don't want to misrepresent, but at the same time I'm curious about how a state can be successful in ensuring this without it being explicitly called out for in a state charter law.

SCOTT: Well, so it's not just law, it's law or regulations or other policies. And so, there may be opportunities for the SEA through its policies to put this in place. Or, you may need to go to your superintendent and say, we need to talk to the legislature. The way we've been approaching this with the states who won last year is, they all signed it and then we had discussions with all of them, typically in sort of November or December, saying "How are you doing this and can you send us documentation?" And we're now in the process of reviewing that documentation and going through it with them. And, you know, we're trying to take the broadest view we can of this, but it is the law and we need to enforce it. And, you know, in some cases, it may be that we will not be able to award a continuation award to a state if we've concluded that the measures they're taking don't fulfill it. But I guess what I would say is, the process we've set up, you know, gives people let's say a year and a half to get in compliance with it. You know about it now, and by the time it would actually result in an action it would be—assuming you won this year's competition—it would start to bite in the continuation. So, you know, it would be, let's say, summer of FY [fiscal year] 12. But the wording is pretty clear, and I can't say whether simply making that a requirement of the grant competition would go far enough, because it does say that each charter school in the state operate under a legally binding charter performance contract and that authorized public chartering agencies use increases in student academic achievements as the most important factor. You know, the

other thing you can do is you can talk to your legislators, because that's where this came from.

CINDY: Right. Thank you for the context. I appreciate it.

SCOTT: Okay.

PEGGIE: Cliff, did you have a follow-up question or did Erin answer your question?

CLIFF: I did, actually. Back onto the section on the project management plan where Scott referenced that that's where we should address compliance issues that came up in monitoring and how we've fixed them. Part one of the question is, Will the peer reviewers have access or have been expected to read the SEA's most recent monitoring report? Can we assume that or, do we have...?

SCOTT: No, they will not have. They will only be reading what you submit.

CLIFF: So, are USED staff going to check that piece or are they going to score that as part of the project management plan? Because they won't know what we got scored low on, and precious pages are at stake here. So we can try to do it briefly. The other question is that...

SCOTT: I would do it briefly, but I wouldn't... I would say that if a state lies or says we're in compliance with everything and then they get a high score.... We have the ability under the award basis section to change a state's award based on that. So, I don't think you need to go on at length, but if you say "Look, we got a one in these six areas and we've addressed all six" and you take a sentence each to say what you've done.

CLIFF: Okay, but then the other question around this is, our last monitoring report was actually two grants ago.

SCOTT: Really?

CLIFF: Yeah. So we don't have a current assessment, because we've already addressed those issues and probably new issues have cropped up. But we don't...

SCOTT: Then you're in luck. Which state is this? I'm sorry.

CLIFF: This is New York. Our monitoring visit happened in December 2008, but it was for our 05–08 grant. It was right before we were awarded our 08–11 grant, and it's probably because in New York state we didn't have to do as many extensions, we haven't skipped any years. But now we're at this point writing the 11, you know, the next grant.

SCOTT: I would just use whatever was the most recent one.

CLIFF: Okay, thanks.

SCOTT: Sure.

PEGGIE: Are there other questions? You can enter them through the chat or speak up over the phone or raise your hand.

JOANNA: Joanna from Massachusetts. I'm back on the criterion 5, because we're our own authorizer, how we would answer the question. So you said to provide what processes we used to make sure that we're only authorizing high-quality schools. I know you're not going to be reading it, but would I go through, like, our peer review process, the application process from beginning to end?

SCOTT: Well, no. This really focuses on the SEA's plan to monitor and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies through such activities as providing technical assistance or establishing a professional development program. So I would focus, I mean, you can talk about, the authorizer process and why it's high-quality, but I would also look at the actual language of that question and say, you know, "What kind of training do we provide the people who actually do the authorizing? What are the metrics that we use to determine how successful we are? Do we have a performance improvement plan for improving the quality of our authorizing, and what does that look like?" It would be those sorts of things that really go to how the authorizer is ensuring that it's operating at a high-quality level.

JOANNA: Okay. Just one more question regarding what Cindy was talking about. Exactly what page is that assurance on?

SCOTT: It's the application package, not the federal register notice. The assurances are on pages 76 and 77.

JOANNA: Okay, of the application package.

SCOTT: Yes.

FEMALE: I have a question about points. So there are seven selection criteria and those seven selection criteria total 110 points.

SCOTT: Right.

FEMALE: Then with the competitive it would be 160.

SCOTT: Right.

FEMALE: I wanted to make sure, because 110 is unusual.

SCOTT: Well, it's 100 if you.... Yeah, it is unusual. You're right. It's 100 if you don't apply for dissemination funds.

FEMALE: Okay.

SCOTT: That's less unusual, right?

FEMALE: No, well it's unusual in that basically it is over and above, in a sense, as you're saying, if you don't apply, if you go further it is.

SCOTT: But like I said, it's not like you get extra points. We take the total number of possible points and then we normalize it.

FEMALE: Correct, if you're going for one, your total possible points is 100. If you're going for the other, your total possible points is 110. I get that.

SCOTT: But actually your total possible is 150 or 160.

FEMALE: Without the competitive though, I mean the actual required, the minimum you have to address.

SCOTT: Right.

FEMALE: That makes sense.

MARGARET: Margaret from Oregon. Selection criterion 6 is the only place that you talk about this dissemination grant if you're applying for funds to award that, is that correct?

SCOTT: Yes, correct.

MARGARET: Thank you.

LESLIE: I would just like to go back briefly to the previous speaker talking about the dissemination piece. Please don't feel that you're going to be penalized. It's up to the state whether or not they want to respond to selection criterion 6. It's up to them whether or not they're go have a dissemination piece in their grant or not. So if you decide to not have a dissemination subgrant program, you're not going to be penalized for that.

PEGGIE: Are there other questions or comments?

FEMALE: Yes, I've had a question I've wondered about for a while. If an SEA does not have a charter grant, then schools can apply directly to ED for their charter, correct?

SCOTT: Correct.

LESLIE: If the state has its own standing charter school legislation.

FEMALE: Okay. My question is, what is the benefit to having the state have this as opposed to having the schools apply directly to ED? In other words, if the state has it, the schools apply to the state and the state applies to the feds.

SCOTT: Yes.

FEMALE: In other words, the school just applies directly to the fed, so...

SCOTT: I would say there are three benefits. The first is that there's 5 percent of administrative funds, so many states use that to basically support their charter schools office, although obviously a significant portion of that is used to run the competitions and things like that. The second benefit is that you get to run the competition the way you want to and you get to run your program the way you want to as opposed to us, so you're able to shape your charter school program and your charter school grant program to be consistent with your overall state education policies and charter school policies. And then the third benefit, I guess, would be that when I look at the success rate of charter schools when they apply for the federal program, it's typically around 30 percent, and the success rate at the state level is much higher. It's usually more like double that. And so, I guess I would say if future awards are consistent with what we've seen in the past, a higher percentage of charter schools in your state would be awarded funds.

FEMALE: Okay, thank you very much.

PEGGIE: Any other questions or comments?

SCOTT: No.

PEGGIE: Great.

SCOTT: Well, thank you all for your patience over this long call. We remain available at any time people have any questions about this application and also if you have suggestions for how it can be improved. We're always looking for ways to make it better.

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So thanks again and thanks also to Peggie and the staff of the Charter School Resource Center for organizing this.

PEGGIE: No worries. Thank you all for participating and the webinar will be archived by the end of the day on Friday. Oh, Beth, do you have a question?

BETH: I just wanted to say thanks.

PEGGIE: You're welcome. I am going to put up an application—I'm sorry, I mean an evaluation—shortly, so if you could spend a few minutes filling out the evaluation, it would be helpful to get some feedback about how we can improve these in the future. Have a wonderful afternoon and thank you for participating.

FEMALE: Thanks, Scott and Leslie, this was helpful.

MALE: Thank you.